

Session: **Workshop: Improving university teaching in sport management I.**  
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### **Nurturing creativity in sport management education**

*C.A. Costa<sup>1</sup>, B.C. Green<sup>2</sup>, C.M. Daprano<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Recreation Sport and Tourism, Champaign, USA*

<sup>2</sup>*University of Texas at Austin, Kinesiology and Health Education, Austin, USA*

<sup>3</sup>*University of Dayton, Health & Sport Science, Dayton, USA*

ccarla@illinois.edu

#### **1. Relevance/ significance of the topic to sport management instructors.**

**Throughout the years society (including organizations) has counted on education and specifically universities to teach and train individuals who are competent at handling current complex situations as well as successful at guiding their communities into a desired future. However, recently many organizations are struggling to find people who are creative, innovative and adaptable. Industries are changing at an unprecedented rate and scale. The future was never this uncertain.**

**Our discipline and our own institutions are not immune to the increasingly rapid pace of social, economic and technological change. We (the authors) are personally experiencing the challenges of this new reality in our departments. Further, we are feeling the pressure and starting to see the frustration and discontentment of graduating students as well as their employers regarding our graduates' level of preparedness (or lack of) to navigate and thrive in today's professional world. Several other sport management scholars have voiced their concerns and begun advocating for different approaches. For example, Light and Dixon (2007) suggest that it is crucial to teach students to learn how to learn, to be able to look at issues from multiple perspectives, and to adapt to changing situations.**

#### **2. Review of relevant literature**

**This presentation was inspired mainly by the work of two authors - Nancy Adler (2006) and Ken Robinson (2001) - who are committed to looking at our current educational systems, assessing them, acknowledging their core flaws and proposing ways of 'seeing' them with new 'eyes'. Independently they make a call for educational transformation (not just reform!). Such a shift requires an expansion of our ways of perception, our ways of thinking and an inquiry into our underlying values (not easily done!).**

**Educational reforms are usually comprised of 3 elements: curriculum, assessment and pedagogy. When revising an educational system or a program (the level at which most of us would be involved) the main focus tends to be on curriculum and assessment. Robinson (2001) explains that the main reason for this is that we think of those 2 elements as the 'levers' of change while forgetting that pedagogy is the 'heart' of education. The focus of pedagogy is on improving teaching (and learning). Great teachers throughout times have**

modeled the natural capacities of creative thinking, innovation as well as alternative ways of seeing, and have found ways to inspire and encourage their student to do the same.

As noted by Robinson (2001), it is important to notice that the present educational system rewards academic ability. The main reason being, that the whole system was designed to meet the needs of 19th century industrialism (which focused primarily on the skills/abilities that were useful for successfully performing at work). Not surprisingly, academic ability came to dominate our view of intelligence narrowing its scope. In order to move forward and be able to respond to the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century we must reconnect intelligence and creativity, which means, breaking the current cycle in higher education that promotes a narrow idea of intelligence and ability (i.e., one that rewards mainly academic ability) and consequently instills in students a fear of being wrong (which counters creativity).

### **3. Clarity of purpose/objectives of the presentation**

Given the challenges we are facing, how do we move forward? The intention of this presentation is to start: 1) furthering our understanding of the nature of creativity; 2) uncovering some of the most prevalent misconceptions around creativity; 3) discussing the consequences of keeping those misconceptions alive; and 4) a dialogue on how to create a culture that systematically nurtures and cultivates creativity in our sport management programs both at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

### **4. Potential for impact on teaching quality**

If creativity is the process of having original ideas that have value (Robinson, 2001), can educational systems, and the sport management field in particular, afford to ignore the benefits of creating a culture of creativity? Since creativity is a natural capability that we all have (think of a toddler that is not creative!) and could further develop, then we must get serious about that development. We must treat creativity as a strategic priority; developing it into an operational idea, in the same way we made sport governance (or sport marketing or sport tourism, ... ) an operational idea. Then we must become aware and highlight creativity's connections with the other parts of the curriculum. The intention is to make creativity a centerpiece of sport management education.

### **5. Originality of teaching innovations suggested**

We are strongly suggesting the start of a conversation that could get instructors curious, excited and empowered around challenging and transforming the current academic ability focused educational system. Our belief is that *we* cannot start anywhere else other than

where *we* are. And for most of us that would be undergraduate and graduate Sport management programs! Let's get creative!!

**References:**

Adler, N. (2006). The arts and leadership. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 5, 486-499.

Light, R. & Dixon, M.A. (2007). Contemporary developments in sport pedagogy. *Sport Management Review*, 10, 159-175.

Robinson, K. (2001). *Out of our minds*. Oxford, UK: Capstone.